

How to Keep Your Home Secure While on Vacation

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Going on vacation is an exciting time filled with anticipation and adventure. However, as you prepare for your getaway, it's essential to consider the security of your home while you're away. A well-planned approach can deter potential intruders and ensure peace of mind so that you can enjoy your trip without worrying about what might be happening back home. This comprehensive guide will explore various strategies to keep your home secure while you're on vacation.

Understanding the Risks

The Vulnerability of Vacant Homes

When a house is unoccupied, it becomes vulnerable to break-ins and theft. Criminals often target homes that appear empty, making it crucial to take steps to create the illusion that someone is still inside.

Statistics

1. **High Burglary Rates:** According to the FBI, more than 2 million burglaries occur yearly in the United States, and many happen during the summer months when families are frequently on vacation.
2. **Timeframe:** Studies indicate that most burglars spend less than 10 minutes assessing a property before breaking in, emphasizing the need for proactive measures.

Recognizing Target Patterns

Understanding common patterns among burglars can help inform your security strategy:

- **Visible Signs of Absence:** Uncollected mail, overgrown lawns, or no lights at night signal that a home is vacant.
- **Previous Knowledge:** Some burglars may case a neighborhood in advance, knowing that particular homes will be empty during vacations.

Pre-Vacation Preparations

1. Secure Your Home

Before you leave for vacation, ensure that all entry points are securely locked and reinforced:

- **Reinforce Doors and Windows:** Install heavy-duty deadbolts, strike plates, and window locks to make entries harder to tamper with. Consider using window film for additional protection against shattering.
- **Upgrade Your Locks:** If your locks are old or have been changed out multiple times, consider upgrading to smart locks or high-security locks for added protection.
- **Install Security Bars:** For sliding glass doors, install security bars or locks to prevent easy access.

2. Invest in a Security System

Having a reliable security system can provide peace of mind while you're on vacation:

- **Alarm Systems:** Opt for a system that includes door and window sensors, motion detectors, and glass-break detectors.
- **Cameras:** Installing surveillance cameras can act as both a deterrent and a means of monitoring your property remotely.
- **Professional Monitoring:** Consider subscribing to a professional monitoring service that can alert authorities in case of an emergency.

3. Create an Illusion of Activity

Making your home look occupied is one of the most effective deterrents against burglary:

- **Smart Lighting:** Use smart bulbs or timers to turn lights on and off at different times to simulate activity.
- **Timers for Appliances:** Set timers for TVs and radios to turn on and off intermittently, adding to the illusion of occupancy.
- **Outdoor Maintenance:** Arrange for a neighbor or service to mow your lawn or shovel snow if you're gone for an extended period.

Preparing Your Home

4. Manage Mail and Deliveries

A mailbox overflowing with mail is a clear sign that no one is home. Here are some ways to manage this issue:

- **Hold Mail:** Request a mail hold from the postal service for the duration of your vacation.
- **Stop Newspaper Deliveries:** Pause any newspaper subscriptions while you're away.
- **Arrange for Pickup:** Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to collect your mail and packages regularly.

5. Inform Trusted Neighbors

Building trust with your neighbors can significantly enhance your home security:

- **Neighborhood Watch:** Engage with local neighborhood watch programs to stay informed about community safety concerns.
- **Notify Neighbors:** Let your neighbors know you'll be on vacation, and ask them to keep an eye on your property.
- **Emergency Contact:** Provide a trusted neighbor with your contact information while you're away.

6. Avoid Broadcasting Your Plans

While sharing your excitement on social media is tempting, consider the risks:

- **Delay Announcements:** Avoid posting about your vacation plans until you return home to mitigate the risk of attracting unwanted attention.
- **Privacy Settings:** Adjust privacy settings on social media platforms to limit who can see your posts.

During Your Vacation

7. Monitor Your Home Remotely

Technology has made it easier than ever to monitor your home while you're away:

- **Smart Home Devices:** Invest in smart home technology that allows you to control locks, lights, and alarms remotely.
- **Surveillance Cameras:** Use cameras with mobile app integration to check live feeds from your smartphone.
- **Alerts and Notifications:** Set up alerts for unusual activity detected by your security system or cameras.

8. Maintain Communication

Stay connected to your home and loved ones while you're away:

- **Regular Check-Ins:** Have a designated person (like a family member or neighbor) check your home periodically.
- **Social Media Restrictions:** As mentioned earlier, avoid broadcasting your location publicly. Use private messaging apps or direct communication with friends and family instead.

9. Emergency Preparedness

Even on vacation, it's crucial to be prepared for emergencies:

- **Have a Plan:** Formulate a plan for what to do if something goes wrong while you're away—this could involve contacting your security company or notifying your neighbors.
- **Local Contacts:** Keep a list of local contacts, such as nearby relatives or friends, who can assist in an emergency.

After Your Vacation

10. Return Home Safely

Once you've returned from your trip, take precautions to ensure your property has remained secure:

- **Survey Before Entering:** Before walking into your home, look around for any signs of forced entry or suspicious activity.
- **Check Entrances:** Ensure all windows and doors are secured before entering, especially if you notice anything amiss.

11. Change Your Routine

After returning home, consider changing your daily routine slightly to avoid establishing a predictable pattern:

- **Alter Comings and Goings:** Vary times for leaving and returning home, making it difficult for anyone to anticipate your schedule.
- **Review Security Measures:** Evaluate how well your security measures worked during your absence and improve any areas of concern.

Additional Tips for Enhanced Security

12. Utilize Landscaping Strategically

Your yard can be a powerful tool in deterring burglars. Here are some landscaping tips to enhance home security:

- **Trim Shrubs and Trees:** Keep shrubs and trees well-trimmed to eliminate hiding spots near windows and doors.
- **Thorny Plants:** Plant thorny bushes beneath windows to deter intruders from attempting to enter.

13. Employ Smart Technology

Incorporating smart technology into your home can bolster security while providing convenience:

- **Smart Doorbells:** Devices like video doorbells allow you to see who is at your front door in real-time, even when you're not home.
- **Remote Locking:** Smart locks enable you to lock or unlock doors remotely, which is beneficial if you accidentally left a door open.

14. Regular Security Assessments

Frequent evaluation of your home security measures can help identify weaknesses:

- **Home Security Audits:** Conduct regular audits of your security systems, ensuring everything functions correctly.
- **Stay Informed About Trends:** Keep abreast of local crime trends, adjusting your security measures accordingly.

Insurance Considerations

15. Review Your Homeowners Insurance

Ensuring you have adequate coverage can provide financial protection in the event of a burglary:

- **Coverage Checks:** Review your policy to understand what is covered and whether you need to increase coverage for valuables.
- **Discuss Security Discounts:** Talk to your insurance provider about potential discounts for installing security systems or other preventive measures.

16. Document Valuables

In the event of a theft, having a record of your possessions can aid in recovery:

- **Inventory List:** Create a detailed inventory of valuable items, including serial numbers, photos, and receipts.
- **Safe Storage:** Store important documents and valuables in a secure location or safe.

Final Thoughts on Home Security

Taking the necessary steps to keep your home secure while on vacation can significantly reduce the risk of burglary and enhance your peace of mind. From reinforcing entry points and investing in security systems to creating the illusion of occupancy and engaging with your community, every measure contributes to your overall security strategy.

Ultimately, being proactive about home security ensures that you can fully enjoy your time away without

the constant worry about your property. By following the guidelines outlined in this guide, you can develop a comprehensive plan to protect your home—even when you're thousands of miles away. Remember, safety begins at home, and with careful planning and consideration, you can safeguard your sanctuary while exploring new adventures.

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